Develop a Title for Your Historical Fiction

1. Focus

Explain the Importance of a Title

Say: The title of a book is usually the first thing your audience pays attention to. The title should capture readers’ attention and give them some idea of what the text is about. The title should also make them want to read the text.

Model Brainstorming a Title

Display the mentor text “Tomb Robbers!” in book form or using the interactive whiteboard resources. If you are using the book, use chart paper so you can jot down key words as you model. You can circle or highlight words or phrases using the interactive whiteboard resources.

ancient Egypt
burial chamber
funeral treasures
pharaoh’s pyramid
pharaoh’s treasure
pharaoh’s tomb
tomb robbers

Sample Title Brainstorm

Say: This historical fiction story is about two young people living in ancient Egypt. Let’s imagine that I’m the author of this text and I’m trying to decide on my title. I know how important a good title is, so I’m going to have to think carefully about it. What can I do to get ideas for my title? I’m going to look back at what I’ve written to see if words and ideas in the story give me an inspiration for a title. I’ll make a list of things I find.

Read pages 18–19. Say: This part of the story introduces the setting and the characters. The story takes place in Egypt, so I’m going to write ancient Egypt on the list. The words burial chamber, funeral treasures, and pharaoh’s pyramid are important to the main idea of the story, so I’ll add them to the list as well. Model writing these words on your list.

Read pages 20–21. Say: The words pharaoh’s treasure are mentioned again on these pages as well as the words pharaoh’s tomb. I like the word tomb better than the words burial chamber. Tomb sounds more mysterious. I’ll add these words to the list. Model writing these words on your list.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Learn a strategy for developing a historical fiction title.
• Discuss how to apply the strategies to their own historical fictions.

Preparation

Materials Needed
• Mentor text: “Tomb Robbers!”
• Chart paper and markers
• Interactive whiteboard resources
Read pages 22–25. Say: The tension is building on these pages and the story makes reference to curses and gnarled, shrunken bodies. The characters see where robbers have removed some of the bricks. The tomb robbers had been there before them. The word tomb comes up a lot. It’s probably one of the most important words in the story. Also, the fact that there were tomb robbers who got caught and now Khaba is taking on the role of a tomb robber himself makes the words tomb robbers important. I’ll add them to the list. Model writing these words on your list.

Read pages 26–27. Say: The words tomb and burial chamber come up again on these pages, but nothing else really stands out for me.

Say: Looking back at the list on the chart, I find the word tomb really appeals to me. I want to use that in the title. The important thing about the tomb in the story is that it contains treasures and that people try to rob it. I think “Tomb Robbers!” makes a great title. Since the story is set in Egypt, I’m going to include that in the title, too. My full title is “Tomb Robbers! A Story of Ancient Egypt.” This should give readers a good idea of what the story is about and when it takes place, but it also sounds exciting. I think it will make people want to read the story.

2. Rehearse

Practice Generating Title Ideas

Invite students to begin the process of looking for key words in their drafts of their historical fiction stories to come up with ideas for a title. Students will not have time to complete the activity, but they can continue with the process during independent reading time.

Share and Discuss

Bring students together and invite them to talk about the process of generating titles. Discuss the importance of finding the right title for each piece of writing.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that the words we’ve written in historical fiction stories can provide us with clues to a good title. A good title should be interesting and reflect what happens in our stories. Keep this in mind as you develop a title for your historical fiction story.

Encourage students to apply this strategy for developing a title for the historical fiction stories during independent writing time. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring the class together. Invite volunteers to share the titles they developed and explain their choices. Ask how the strategy of rereading to look for key words and ideas helped them create their titles.

Strategies to Support ELs

**Beginning**

Show students several books and read aloud the titles. Ask students to tell you by using words or gestures what the titles tell them about the books. Work with students one on one to help them create a title for a piece of their own writing.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the practice activity.

**All Levels**

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share this English/Spanish cognate: title/el título.